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SCRIPTURE RIDDLES  
IN VERSE.  

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R. PHILLIPS.







**SCRIPTURE RIDDLES IN VERSE.**



# SCRIPTURE RIDDLES

IN VERSE.

BY

RICHARD PHILLIPS.



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E. W. ALLEN, 11, AVE MARIA LANE, E.C.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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As these Riddles have not been written for either Children or Adults exclusively, it will not be objected that some of the subjects chosen are very much involved, and others very thinly disguised; nor will it be deemed a serious defect, if, as the Author is willing to admit, some of the pieces may be open to the charge of being rather poems than puzzles, when it is understood that it has been his ambition to make them no less the one than the other.

Facility of discovery means laxity of research; and as it has been the Author's aim to furnish a new incentive to the closer study of the narrative portions of Scripture, this, with the fact that all the subjects are taken from one Book, and the belief that the enigmas are all so constructed as to be incapable of two solutions, has induced him to publish the answers in a separate form. [See announcement at the end of the book.]



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## SCRIPTURE RIDDLES.

---

### I.

I was snatched away when young,  
From my kindred, home, and friends—  
Torn from all to which I clung,  
Just to serve another's ends.

All my being felt the shock ;  
Never more was I the same ;  
Scion of a stubborn stock,  
Hard and callous I became.

I could neither stand nor flee,  
Being very weak and small ;  
And he would not set me free,  
So I still abode his thrall.

It was little I could do,  
But I did it, murmuring not ;  
So a trusted friend I grew,  
And a lightener of his lot.

B

*Scripture Riddles.*

But a change came over me,  
And he viewed it with alarm ;  
For too plainly he could see  
That I meant to do him harm.

Murderous, truly, was my mood,  
Fierce mine accents ; so he fled ;  
For he trembled where he stood,  
Fearing I might strike him dead.

But returning from his flight,  
Seized and held me ; then no more  
Showed I any sign of fight,  
But grew harmless as before.

I obeyed a higher will,  
And a grand new name I won ;  
So he could not take it ill,  
Seeing he had suffered none.

There were many like to me,  
But not any half so great ;  
Who another such would see  
Will have very long to wait.

Fire and water, earth and air,—  
Things that fly and things that crawl,  
All my ready servants were—  
Life and death obeyed my call.

I had rivals, but the same  
Came to nothing in strange wise ;  
Covered with defeat and shame,  
Soon they vanished from men's eyes.

Mightiest monarchs bore my name—  
Bore my name, and knew it not ;  
And their office was the same—  
Most unenviable lot.

Thrice I lived, and thrice I died,  
For the breath of life I drew,  
With a double life supplied,  
And a double being too.

When one went the other stayed ;  
Both together none could see—  
Both together could not fade ;  
Where, then, could the other be ?

I was passionless, and wont  
To obey another's will ;  
But I sometimes changed my front,  
And grew active, though for ill.

Every moment of that life,  
Suddenly it came and fled,  
Was a battle to the knife ;  
For I lived to stir up strife,  
But did greater things when dead.

---

II.

A slave—one of a plundering horde—  
Was once deserted by his lord,  
And left to perish on the track.  
His foes discovered him half dead  
With thirst and hunger, and called back  
His spirit which had well nigh fled,  
Not sparing to supply his lack ;  
And thus recovered what they sought.

But that desertion cost them dear  
Who knew not that the same drew near,  
Nor yet by whom the same were brought.

---

## III.

Exalted was my station,  
Although my years were few ;  
A dangerous exaltation,  
But nought thereof I knew.

For I was dull and sunken,  
And wrapt in double night,  
And heavy as one drunken  
Who cannot sit upright.

E'en while I rested, purely,  
Unmindful of mine end,  
My downfall came, and surely  
'Twas hastened by a friend.

I fell not unlamented,  
For all around were sad ;  
But I who seemed contented  
Spake nothing good or bad.

And yet it was a wonder  
That I outlived the blow ;  
No few had died thereunder,  
And quickly, too, I trow.

Raised up anon and righted,  
I found my false friend fled.  
'Twas one whom I had slighted  
That lifted up my head.

IV.

I wore a crown, and though no king,  
I saved one from the murderer's knife ;  
But thereby gained not anything,  
Till one rose up against my life ;  
And then it stood me in good stead,  
But to another's fall it led.

---

V.

A man once served a worthy lord,  
Though one of an unfriendly race.  
He did it of his own accord ;  
And there were many in like case,  
But this man had the highest place.

A famous city gave him birth ;  
And if he ever changed his plan,  
And served the Lord of the whole earth  
(Which none have told us and none can),  
He ended not as he began.

Long time in exile he abode,  
Content to serve through good and ill  
A servant of the one true God—  
An exile once against his will,  
And fearful of a worse thing still.

An ill thing once betid this chief,  
And troubled many in the land.  
Bowed down and broken by his grief,  
The great man seemed for once unmanned—  
A thing not hard to understand.

He would have sent away his friend,  
Who might have helped him in that strait ;  
Not knowing how the thing might end,  
Nor wishing him to share the fate  
Of one so ruined in estate.

Yet that true helper would not go,  
But clave to him through that ill tide,  
Until his lord had lost a foe,  
In whose stead he would fain have died,  
Though justice was upon his side.

---

## VI.

A man once made a fierce assault  
Upon a set of men who foiled  
A noble end for which he toiled,  
And chid them sharply for their fault.  
He also laid them under ban,  
And smote them, and pluckt off their hair ;  
So wroth he was, and made them swear  
To live upon a better plan.

---

## VII.

Three names appear upon the sacred page,  
All in the compass of one age :  
All gentiles, of the same degree.  
Well spoken of were all the three,  
Though one served not the Lord most high,  
Unless he altered as the days went by.

The first of these was humble and yet bold :  
His name remains a thing untold.  
The second, who was greatly blest,  
Once entertained a heaven-sent guest ;  
The third, when all appeared undone,  
Delivered many for the sake of one.

---

VIII.

A monarch who was sore afraid  
Of losing all that he had won,  
And life itself if he delayed  
To do a thing best left undone,  
Called in two helpers to his aid ;  
And this became a deadlier hurt  
Than what he laboured to avert.  
  
In what a crooked path he trod—  
To put more trust in those young twins  
Than in a promise made by God.  
He sinned, and multiplied men's sins—  
A cursed shepherd, by one crime  
Made darkly famous to all time.

---

IX.

They fight, and they prevail, and then  
All gladness they forswear.  
They slink back home like vanquished men,  
And with a guilty air.  
As for their chief, what tongue or pen  
His anguish can declare ?



## X.

A man who knew not danger lurked so near,  
Was once made prisoner by a crafty foe,  
Who told him truly he had naught to fear,  
If he to them a certain thing would show :  
Which thing he did—causing a world of woe—  
He turned a traitor, no one can deny,  
But saved himself and family thereby.

Betrayed by him, an ancient city fell ;  
But he and all his household went their way  
Unto a strange land with strange folk to dwell ;  
But where that was none knoweth to this day.  
And there he built another town, men say,  
And called it by the same name as the one  
Which by his treachery he had clean undone.

---

## XI.

A king had once an able friend,  
A cousin, who had served him well,  
And might have done so to the end,  
For aught that any man can tell.  
But vexed at something he had said,  
This kinsman who had made him king,  
And kept the crown upon his head,  
Resolved upon a vengeful thing.  
He could not carry out his plan,  
Tho' not from any want of will ;  
But he was murdered by a man  
Whose brother he was forced to kill.

He fell, lamented by a foe  
Who blamed his slayer for that blow,  
And would have punished him therefor,  
But durst not, for the same we know,  
Was mighty, and a man of war,  
And kinsman to the king also.

---

XII.

Though smitten with a foul complaint,  
He suffered not for any crime.  
It vanished soon, and left no taint,  
But came again another time,  
(Or so I judge) but missed its aim,  
And went as swiftly as it came.

---

XIII.

Somewhere this story has been penned :  
A selfish man  
Was blest with an unselfish friend  
That met with an untimely end,  
And that within a little span  
After their fellowship began.  
It sprang up in a trying time—  
All seemed amiss ;  
Alone, and in a foreign clime,  
Amongst a people steeped in crime,  
He rightly reckoned it great bliss,  
To light on such a friend as this.

*Scripture Riddles.*

And yet he had not asked for aid ;  
    It came unsought.  
He hailed its coming, while it stayed  
He blest it, and had fain delayed  
Its going, for the ease it brought,  
The more so as it cost him nought.

When smitten by an unseen foe,  
    His young friend died ;  
He seemed distracted by the blow,  
And called for death to lay him low ;  
Not caring to outlive that tide ;  
And no man marked him when he cried.

---


## XIV.

A man once set forth on a perilous track,  
Not long was the journey, but rough was the way.  
And he had not gone far when he found in dismay,  
That he could not go forward nor yet return back,  
Nor stay where he was, though he cared not to  
    stay.

---

## XV.

As long as in the flesh I dwelt  
I ne'er was seen, though often felt,  
And death to many a thing I dealt.  
  
My master died, and in brief space  
Was eaten by a ravenous race ;  
I nearly shared the same disgrace.



I lay concealed, they found my lair,  
And, raging, fell upon me there ;  
And left me helpless, bruised, and bare.

Scarce from that trouble was I freed,  
When one, a stranger, in his need,  
Beheld me, victim of their greed.

He seized me, even as I lay,  
And did great things upon that day ;  
This done, he went upon his way.

He deemed me now a thing of nought,  
And left me, with a passing thought,  
Amid the ruin I had wrought.

---

XVI.

He said that he had met a foe,  
And helped him in his need, although  
He was a waster of his land ;  
And men were troubled when they heard.  
He lied, but they believed his word ;  
Were not the plain proofs in his hand ?

They did to him what he had done,  
According to his tale, to one  
Whose name was hateful to his race.  
'Twas not the guerdon that he sought,  
But worse than nothing, and was fraught  
With sorrow, for it changed his face.

## XVII.

They ask and have ; but not content,  
They will not take the thing when sent :  
In fear and wonder they refuse,  
And chide the bringer of the news.

---

## XVIII.

A strange man lived in days ago,  
Who had a servant scant of wit.  
But God enlightened her, whereon  
She did what she had never done,  
And much was he amazed at it.  
He found, in anger and distress,  
She would not do as she was bid ;  
He knew not why, and could not guess ;  
Her conduct seemed pure stubbornness,  
For from his eyes the thing was hid.  
He struck her, for his wrath ran high,  
And she rebuked him for the deed ;  
But little good she gat thereby,  
Till one spake out who stood anigh,  
And bade the foolish man take heed.

---

## XIX.

A servant of a heathen king  
Whose life was threatened, was advised,  
To do what seemed a prudent thing ;  
But all such counsel he despised ;

And this was from a foe disguised,  
And one confederate with his foes ;  
But of their plotting well apprised,  
He warily escaped their blows,  
And braved each danger that arose.

---

XX.

Some men once took a thing in hand ;  
But did not do as they had planned,  
Filled with a reasonable fear  
That some might serve them as they sought  
To serve another, and they thought  
They saw the very men draw near.

They went their way and left half done  
A matter only just begun,  
And never wholly carried out.  
And yet it was a kindly deed,  
And one whereof there was great need ;  
But theirs was greater, past all doubt.

They did the best thing they could do ;  
It proved the very best thing, too ;  
And if they had returned and done  
What they had purposed at the first,  
It would have been a deed accurst,  
And something new beneath the sun.

## XXI.

A few poor men once failed to do  
A certain thing, and lost all heart,  
Until a friend allayed their smart;  
When one among them bade him go  
Elsewhither; but he meant not so,  
Nor did that other man depart.

---

## XXII.


A wounded and grief-stricken band  
Of pilgrims set forth on a day  
To go into another land,  
With pious offerings in their hand,  
But met with treachery by the way;  
And seventy perished in that fray.  
Three cities sent the pilgrims forth—  
Three cities lying in the north—  
But in one ditch the dead men lay.

---

## XXIII.

A nation troubled with ill-grounded fears  
(There was no danger, as it now appears),  
Craved help of one whose fame had reached their  
ears.

Strange was the help they prayed for in that strait.  
Their case seemed urgent, and their need seemed  
great;  
And well he knew it, yet he made them wait.



He came from far to help them with his lore,  
But could not aid them, though it grieved him sore.  
He never saw his own land any more.

For he departed with a reverend band,  
And came ere long into another land  
Whose folk had asked the same thing at his hand.

He throve at first, or seemed to, as some thought ;  
But failed at last though cunningly he wrought,  
And his reward was not the one he sought.

---

XXIV.

A slave, a seer, and a king,  
Once met to do a rueful thing.

The king was wroth, the seer sad,  
And mickle fear the servant had.

The monarch proved devoid of grace,  
And darker grew the seer's face.

When all was ended no one stirr'd.  
The seer never spoke a word.

He heeded not the passers by,  
Nor yet the others who stood nigh.

The slave said naught ; his liege was dumb ;  
They waited for a fourth to come.

The hungry king had choice of meat  
Before him, but he would not eat.



A subject brought it him that day,  
But had to take it all away.  
Then one to whom the thing was known  
Came musing down the road alone.  
He filled the office of a friend.  
He brought that meeting to an end.  
Back to his halls the monarch went.  
The slave departed well content.  
The seer returned the way he came,  
And that new-comer did the same.

---

## XXV.

We two, alone, supported  
By only four at most,  
Rose up, unarmed, and thwarted  
The valour of a host.  
Our fall was their uprising ;  
Our rising was their fall ;  
Nor was it deemed surprising  
That one prevailed o'er all.

---

## XXVI.

A certain king who thirsted for redress,  
Sent a brief challenge to a neighbouring foe,  
Thereto emboldened by a late success,  
And disregardful of a threatened blow ;  
A hireling host had done him heavy wrong ;  
Should it go scatheless of a foe so strong ?

The challenged man sent back a taunting word  
(Couched in strange terms were message and reply)  
Of his proud foe's late victory he had heard,  
But was not troubled, as it seemed, thereby.  
He gave to his ill-counselled foe good rede ;  
But he was hardened, and he would not heed.

They met in battle, but it went not there  
With that first king according to his thought ;  
For back into his city, in despair,  
A humbled captive he ere long was brought ;  
And ne'er recovered from that heavy blow,  
Although he failed not to outlive his foe.

---

## XXVII.

A man once offered in a generous mood  
    (A thing he rued),  
To pay for something far beyond its worth,  
    And dashed his mirth  
With sudden sorrow which he could not hide,  
    Howso he tried  
Who deemed himself a great one in the earth,  
    By rank and birth,  
But proved himself the very fool of pride.

---

## XXVIII.

A solitary man once prayed  
    For help in his distress.  
It was a lying part he played,  
And though the other lent his aid,

He was much troubled and afraid,  
Yet knew not more nor less  
Than what the needy man had said,  
Whatever he might guess  
From his utter neediness.

There was good reason for his fear,  
Nor was it long time hid ;  
And that kind action cost him dear—  
Betrayed by one who stood anear,  
And with attentive eye and ear  
Had noted all he did ;  
Although his innocence was clear,  
Unjustly he was chid ;  
And a worse thing soon betid.

---


## XXIX.

They meant no ill and did no harm,  
But certain who misread their thought  
(And these were many) in alarm  
Rebuked them sharply, all for nought ;  
And this, too, with the best intent.  
But learning what the matter meant,  
They changed their tone, for read aright,  
The thing was pleasing in their sight.

---

## XXX.

A man once quarrelled with his friend,  
And seemed resolved to make him smart ;  
But dared not touch him in the end,



Whate'er he purposed in his heart ;  
And he had often done him wrong,  
Well knowing that he was not strong.

He poured forth censure in a flood,  
And charged him with a crime beside,  
Not knowing how the thing then stood ;  
But could not prove it though he tried ;  
Whereat the other's wrath 'gan burn,  
And he grew angry in his turn.

He chid him with the many things  
Which he had suffered at his hands.  
What wonder these had lent him wings ?  
Or that he longed to burst his bands ?  
But both grew friends again that day,  
And on the morrow went their way.

---

XXXI.

There once was seen a hunted band,  
All wet and cold, and weary, too,  
And distant each from his own land,  
Their trusted friends had proved untrue ;  
But now escaped from that fell crew,  
They cast about as best they might  
To find some ease in their sad plight.

Plundered of all by that fell foe,  
That hemmed them in, and fierce of mood  
Still waited for them down below,  
But could not climb to where they stood ;  
Break through they cannot, if they would,  
Nor yet regain what they have lost,  
Save some few trifles at the most.

But danger threatened them anew—  
A foe more cunning than the rest  
Stole from his covert ere they knew,  
And smote their wisest and their best;  
Who, somewhat startled, like the rest,  
Trembled no whit, nor feared, I trow,  
To meet unarmed a well-armed foe.

For nothing daunted by a wound  
That must have proved another's bane,  
Unholpen, too, of those around,  
Who stood and stared upon the twain ;  
He slew his foe with little pain.  
So all went well, despite their fears.  
Now tell me where the tale appears ?


---

## XXXII.

It was his, and his right  
Was as clear as the light,  
And that ere his birth;  
And he rightly esteemed it a thing of great worth.

He put forth no claim ;  
But, somewhat to blame,  
He bought it of one,  
Who was afterwards vexed at the thing he had done.

Not sure of it yet,  
Since men could forget,  
He gained it again,  
In a wrong way wherein he was like to be slain.



XXXIII.

A godless man once formed a plan,  
And aided by his friends,  
He shed a flood of kindred blood,  
And all for selfish ends.

Unnatural deed, avenged with speed,  
Ungrateful folk who helped  
This child of hell, this cub more fell  
Than tiger ever whelped.

He gained the throne, he reigned alone,  
And prospered for a time;  
But God was wroth and plagued them both,  
So hateful was their crime.

The bad man's folk cast off his yoke,  
But did so to their grief:  
God gave the horde to fire and sword,  
And scourged them through their chief,

Who fell ere long, cast down though strong,  
And by a feeble foe—  
A death of shame—but who can blame  
The dealer of the blow?

---

XXXIV.

One to whom the wise deferred,  
And were silent when they heard,  
For his word was as the word  
Of a god,

Being tempted by some prize,  
Fell to folly, though so wise  
That kings waited with wide eyes  
For his nod.

He was cunning in his sin,  
And he went the way to win ;  
But he prospered not therein,  
Which was well ;  
Being thwarted in his plan  
By a deep-designing man,  
Though he triumphed for a span,  
As befel.

Then he took the way that led  
To the dark land of the dead ;  
For he saw that hope had fled  
Past recall ;  
And he did not choose to wait  
For the coming of the fate,  
That he reckoned, soon or late,  
Must befall.

---

XXXV.

An armed band, compelled to roam,  
Came seeking for another home ;  
And settled down, and heaped up store  
Where none had ever lived before.

They kept no flocks nor tilled the ground,  
But plundered all the land around,  
Until their dwelling grew to men  
More loathsome than a lion's den.

A thief found out what they had stored,  
And coveting the golden hoard,  
Entered their hold, seized on their gains,  
And left them nothing for their pains.

---

## XXXVI.

They turn away from their own land—  
From friends and offspring they have gone—  
At no entreaty or command :  
An unseen power impels them on ;  
And certain follow in their train.  
With every motive to remain,  
They do not tarry, nor look back,  
Nor are they silent on their track.

---

## XXXVII.

A monarch who had been befooled,  
Not once nor twice, we all know how,  
Heard that his enemy was now  
Within the city where he ruled.  
Although he seemed within his power,  
He had no thought to do him harm ;  
Nor felt, himself, the least alarm,  
Though he was helpless that same hour.  
And yet, indeed, he could not rest :  
He had his fears, but these were stilled ;  
And hopes, that never were fulfilled,  
Sprang up and blossomed in his breast.



## XXXVIII.

Made by a good man for the good of men,  
I did much good, but honoured past my worth  
I did much ill, unwittingly, and then  
A good man rose and swept me from the earth.  
He gave me, too, a name before I fell—  
A title of contempt that fitted me right well.

---

## XXXIX.

A man began to fume and fret,  
When courteously besought  
To pay some portion of a debt,  
That far surpassed his thought.  
His creditor, though once his friend,  
Thereon became his foe,  
And vowed revenge, but in the end  
Was moved to let him go.  
Yet he was well avenged with speed,  
And then he was full glad  
That he was guiltless of a deed  
That must have made him sad.

---

## XL.

A man, who had a wretched end,  
Was once recounting what he knew  
Of one who was the listener's friend ;  
And if he gave the same his due,  
The ears that listened did not fail  
To hear a wonderful, strange tale.

He told a tale, among the rest,  
Of what had happened years ago,  
To certain who were much distressed,  
And helped as mightily anon.  
Then a new danger reared its head ;  
But they had warning and they fled.

They left the land whence they had sprung,  
And dwelt among a heathen folk.  
But while the words were on his tongue  
Up came the twain of whom he spoke,  
And stood before their very eyes,  
A matter of unfeigned surprise.

Unknown to him who told their tale,  
Back to their own land they had come,  
And that mazed listener did not fail  
To question them, nor were they dumb ;  
But soon confirmed the first man's word.  
And all men marvelled when they heard.

---

XLI.

A cast-out pair, condemned to roam  
From their old home,  
Went journeying onward to a new,  
Still far from view.

Forlorn and lonely, on they went,  
Till one, clean spent,  
Sank down, forwearied, and his cry  
Went up on high.

## XLII.

A woman secretly transgressed,  
And gained her purpose. If suspected,  
She ne'er repented, nor confessed,  
Nor made amends, nor was detected,  
Nor yet betrayed by friend or foe,  
That is, for anything we know.

She duped her kinsman ; but the same  
Well-nigh discovered what was hidden.  
A guiltless person had the blame,  
The guilty one escaped unchidden.  
The matter made a mighty stir,  
But could in nowise profit her.

It was a cruel thing to do,  
But in a worse thing still it ended,  
Although a common thing, 'tis true,  
And there was nothing wrong intended.  
How could she reckon that a sin  
Which was the custom of her kin ?

---

## XLIII.

Upon a message I was sent  
By one who knew not whither I went ;  
And how I fared he never learned,  
For back to him I ne'er returned.  
But it was better than he thought—  
I found a greater than he sought ;  
Brief was my journey, scant my lore,  
And sad the message that I bore.

## XLIV.

A sick man lay upon his bed ;  
And in a doubtful state,  
Not trusting what the leeches said,  
He wished to know his fate.  
Would his distemper lay him dead ?  
Or leave him soon or late ?  
But there were none could tell him this,  
Except a neighbouring foe  
Who owed him nothing, as I wis ;  
But being now brought low,  
He asked him in a tone submiss,  
Not doubting he would know.  
He sent him, too, a noble fee.  
What answer would it bring ?  
He asked not healing, it may be,  
It seemed too great a thing,  
Or something not for such as he,  
Although he was a king.  
Yet, if he had but little faith,  
The boon was not denied.  
*His sickness was not unto death.*  
Yet presently he died.  
What was it that cut short his breath ?  
Or who was it that lied ?

---

## XLV.

Gained only by laborious strife,  
And strength of limb, and risk of life,  
Yet cast away as soon as won  
By him for whom the thing was done.

## XLVI.

A good man died, leaving six sons behind.  
To each his portion he assigned ;  
But made the eldest one his heir,  
Who, not contented with his share,  
Turned on his brothers, as we find,  
And slew them all on some vain plea,  
Though each one was a better man than he.

Short space had he wherein to work his will ;  
Yet in the same he did much ill,  
Stirred up thereto by his bad queen,  
As by a single word is seen.  
And so he grew a worse man still  
Than was her sire in days gone by,  
Like whom he sinned, and with a like ally.

He had to wife a dame of high degree,  
One of an evil family ;  
Herself no saint, but by-and-by,  
A murderess of the deepest dye.  
As did her mother so did she ;  
And worsening as the years went past,  
She justly perished by the sword at last.

Greatly he suffered and in many ways,  
For few and evil were his days.  
Beside the slaughter of his kin,  
He forced the people on to sin,  
And that was little to his praise.  
Swiftly he passed from bad to worse,  
Therefore God cursed him with a heavy curse.

Already had his punishment begun,  
And now a sorer time came on.  
His foes brake in upon his land,

And sacked his palace. By their hand  
His children perished, all save one,  
Who fell into his father's crime,  
And like that father died before his time.  
He drained God's curse out to the very lees,  
And perished of a sore disease.  
They made for him no funeral fires,  
Nor was he buried with his sires—  
Unworthy to be laid with these—  
Yet seeing he had worn the crown,  
His folk interred him in the royal town.

---

## XLVII.

Two men who were at enmity  
About some matter, now unknown,  
Grew friends again, when one had shown  
The other what he longed to see—  
A sight that filled him with great glee.  
But presently he changed his tone—  
He saw the sight for which he sighed ;  
And yet he was not satisfied,  
Nor was it fitting he should be.

---

## XLVIII.

A brave young man was promised, on a time,  
A higher office than he filled that day—  
A lofty place, to which he could not climb  
While he continued in another's pay.

No more, then, in his own land might he stay,  
Lest his new hopes should perish in their birth,  
And he should die when life seemed of most worth.

And in the end the promise was fulfilled ;  
But he, ungrateful, went astray ere long,  
And missed the sure house which God would not  
build,  
And could not prosper, though he seemed so strong.  
Much did he sin, and many he led wrong ;  
And in the end he perished for his crime,  
Leaving his name a byword to all time.

---

#### XLIX.

Heavy was the load it bore  
For a very little while ;  
Bright the colour that it bore.  
Never after or before  
Was it handled in such style.

Soon it played another part,  
In a wonderful event.  
Many in their rage of heart,  
Would have made the owner smart,  
Had they gathered what it meant.

---

#### L.

Somewhere, this story have I read :—  
A wretch fordome,

Craved aidance, being hard bestead,  
And that of one  
Who might have often wished him dead.

And one, too, whom awhile ago  
He would have chased ;  
But he had fallen now so low  
That he made haste  
To gather what the same could show.

Then there rose up a once great chief,  
To whom he told  
His trouble, and the tale was brief ;  
And when unrolled,  
Availed him nothing—to his grief.

For this man, summoned to his aid,  
Pronounced his doom,  
And spake, too, of a man who stayed  
To fill his room ;  
Then he was horribly afraid.

---

## LI

A prince came limping from a strife wherein  
He was not worsted, yet he could not win  
Without a struggle, for he strove alone,  
And with a force far greater than his own.  
But in the end the other side 'gan fly.

There was no loss that answered to his gain,  
Nor did his victory give another pain,  
And he himself was little hurt thereby.



## LII.

A man whom many would have slain,  
And for a less offence,  
Awhile was suffered to remain,  
It may be, in suspense,  
Yet safety ; pardoned, I maintain,  
Not altogether, as is plain,  
But only in a sense.

For when the king died, and his son  
Was reigning in his stead,  
The evil he had said and done  
Returned upon his head :  
A threatened penalty, twice won,  
But such as any fool might shun  
And die upon his bed.

---

## LIII.

There reigned a mighty lord of old,  
The ruler of a conquering race ;  
Of wealth and influence untold,  
But vile and base.

He dwelt in more than kingly state,  
Honoured and feared by old and young ;  
Stiffnecked, hard-hearted, fixed as fate,  
And not unsung.

There came a strange guest to his hall,  
But not to bend the supple knee.  
That stranger brought about his fall,  
And did not flee.

But left him smitten without hand ;  
Dejected, humbled, and abased ;  
And went in triumph through his land,  
And laid it waste.

And then passed home with gifts and bribes,  
Unhurt of any, high or low ;  
Revered and honoured by whole tribes,  
And yet their foe.

---

## LIV.

A man who well deserved to die  
Was once forgiven by his foe,  
Who suffered heavy loss thereby.  
Doubtless he should have laid him low,  
And yet he weakly let him go,  
Trusting his word to make amends,  
And thinking they would now be friends.

He saw anon how he had err'd,  
And how the other man had lied.  
His new friend never kept his word,  
Nor could he make him though he tried ;  
For when, a helper at his side,  
He sought fulfilment of his oath,  
He well nigh proved the bane of both.

---

## LV.

As a helper of the straitened I arose,  
How I made the strong ones tremble, each one knows.  
Well could I bring down the lofty from their place,  
Or I had the warlike temper of my race.

But a hard stroke on a sudden laid me low ;  
And a man who was my debtor dealt the blow.  
Heavy-headed then I gat me to my bed,  
And in little space was lying cold as lead.  
In a deep grave I was buried out of sight ;  
Covered up, it seemed for ever, from the light.  
Lower than my foes had fallen, now I lay,  
And my fellows could not help me on that day.  
There was grief and lamentation at my fall,  
And the causer of it sorrowed most of all.  
But he found a mighty helper who could save  
From worse trouble, and he raised me from the  
grave.  
Great the joy was, and the wonder all around,  
When once more among the living I was found.

---

LVI.

A hater of all strife  
Adventured once his life  
In deadly battle with a conquering foe ;  
Supported by his friends,  
And for unselfish ends,  
And gained the victory by a sudden blow.  
He did it all for one  
Whose sorrows had begun—  
A good man though a selfish and unwise ;  
And gained not lands, nor gold,  
Nor aught that hands can hold,  
Nor any glory that is seen of eyes.

## LVII.

A stranger once addressed a word  
That scarce seemed true,  
To one who doubted when he heard ;  
And thereunto  
Replying, openly demurred.  
He knew not whence the other came  
Till he was gone.  
He learned his errand and his aim,  
And that anon ;  
But he could never learn his name.  
And all came true, though his sad heart  
Was full of doubt.  
He played anon a glorious part,  
And thus found out,  
As did some others to their smart.

---

## LVIII.

There lived a liar once who planned  
How best to bring a true man low  
Who dwelt within a far-off land,  
And foiled his purposes. Although  
He could not reach him with his hand,  
Might not another deal the blow ?  
So in a lordly tone he wrote,  
And to a wiser man, I wis,  
Whose work it was, he said, to note  
And punish madmen like to this,  
(Almost his very words I quote),  
And wherefore had he been remiss ?

But this man proved a poor ally,  
 And would not do what he had willed.  
 He read it while his foe stood by,  
 But left it wholly unfulfilled ;  
 And it drew forth a stern reply  
 From lips that he would fain have stilled.

Because he prophesied unsent,  
 Misleading many whom he led,  
 Therefore the bow of God was bent  
 Against him, and the arrow sped ;  
 So all the mischief that he meant,  
 Returned upon his own bad head.

## LIX.

A soldier drew near to a fortified town—  
     A city cast down  
 At the fame of the name of a folk of renown.  
 And he looked, and behold, there stood one in his  
     sight,  
     For battle bedight,  
 With ready drawn weapon as ready to smite.  
 He knew not if this was a friend or a foe,  
     For he spake not, and so  
 He challenged him boldly, determined to know.  
 Not mean was his station, nor low his degree,  
     But whate'er they might be  
 He learned that he spake to a greater than he :  
 A leader of armies exceeding his own,  
     A prince though unknown,  
 And humbled his bearing, and altered his tone.

## LX.

A man once asked another's aid  
To do a strange thing he had planned.  
The other, doubtful or afraid,  
To his own hurt withheld his hand,  
Not knowing what the man designed,  
Nor wishing to appear unkind.

Denouncing vengeance on his head,  
The first man went upon his way.  
I know not what the other said,  
But it went ill with him that day.  
The very thing he would not do  
He suffered, and a worse thing too.

But soon the first man met with one  
Who rudely gave him what he sought,  
A strange gift, coveted by none,  
And so belike the giver thought :  
Certes, at any other time  
He would have reckoned it a crime.

---

LXI.

Eclipsed and supplanted by him he loved best,  
He went down to his rest  
While the days of the years of his life were but few,  
Bewailed as was due ;  
And leaving a name, and a tale to be told  
That can never grow old,  
And a void in the heart of his friend,  
To ascend  
To a place in the world that is world without end.

## LXII.

There lived and died in troublous times  
A bold bad man of many crimes.  
And this man had, as you may learn,  
A friend of an aspiring turn ;  
Warm-hearted, genial, ardent, prone  
To rage sometimes, but never known  
To injure any : nowise base ;  
The parent of a rising race  
That perished in a little space.  
He had, moreover, in his court  
A helper of a clerkly sort,  
But fit for nothing great or grand—  
A mere tool in the tyrant's hand.

He once beheld, devoid of fear,  
A something from the dead draw near  
To warn him, but he liked it not ;  
For presently his wrath waxed hot ;  
And minded in his rage and spite,  
To do it all the harm he might,  
He gave commandment, and the twain  
Seized on it. Then it writhed amain,  
And twisted like a thing in pain,  
Its form distorted in a strife  
For very being, not mere life :  
For it was dead and could not die,  
And soon it perished utterly.

---

LXIII.

When told to go, they would not stir,  
When told to stay they went ;  
But started after much demur,  
And failed in their intent.  
As was most certain to occur,  
However well they meant ;  
They heeded neither rein nor spur,  
And therefore they were made to err.

---

LXIV.

There lived a wicked and weak-minded king  
Who had a servant pious and humane,  
Who once was told to do a certain thing  
Which filled him with astonishment and pain.  
He deemed he had good reason to complain.  
Although it was a good man gave the word,  
He feared to do it, but his fears were vain,  
And learning this no longer he demurred.

---

LXV.

There was once a good man's son,  
Who was guilty of such things  
As had never yet been done,  
By the very worst of kings.



Then came exile, but his prayer  
Saved him, for he learnt therein  
What he could not learn elsewhere,  
And repented of his sin.

So a better life he planned :  
Few that went forth in like case  
E'er returned to their own land ;  
But they granted him that grace.

So he came back to his own,  
Like one risen from the dead,  
Who another man has grown ;  
And another life he led.

---

## LXVI.

A man attempting to regain  
A something gone beyond recall,  
Met with a hindrance which 'tis plain  
He had not reckoned on at all.  
The way was plain, the path was clear,  
He had the very goal in sight,  
And hearing, he had drawn so near,  
Yet missed it, and was served aright.

---

## LXVII.

A woman once condemned an act,  
Which rather should have had her praise,  
And with ironic speech attacked  
The doer—shocked at such displays—  
But suffered for it all her days,  
For there was something that she lacked.

LXVIII.

A man was offered a reward  
As yet enjoyed by none.  
The folk were all of one accord,  
But he—'twas nobly done—  
Refused it, for he feared the Lord.  
He craved a lesser thing instead,  
And gained the boon he sought.  
He meant no harm, and yet it led  
To what he had not thought,  
And that or ever he was dead.  
The memory of his glorious deed,  
Ere he had turned to dust,  
Could not avail to save his seed  
From treatment most unjust,  
For no man helped them in their need.  
Yet he had battled for this folk  
Against tremendous odds,  
And freed their galled necks from a yoke  
That bowed them to the clods,  
Moved by the angel of the oak.

---

LXIX.

A man was ordered to destroy—  
Ah ! sad employ—  
A gift that filled him with great joy :  
A task ne'er finished, though begun,  
And that through one  
Who erewhile bade the thing be done :

Who gave the gift, and had no thought  
To make it naught,  
Or mar it, howsoe'er he wrought.

---

## LXX.

In times unsettled, and remote,  
A man went forth to seek his bread,  
Although a person of some note  
If that be true which some have said,  
Who say his grandsire, long since dead,  
Is famed for what he did and wrote.

Howe'er it be, the end is one,  
And all may reckon that a grief.  
He found a home, and did not shun—  
Whether his stay was long or brief ;  
To dwell with a forgiven thief ;  
For he was treated like a son.

But there went by a thievish band  
Of weaponed men intent on ill,  
Who plundered all beneath his hand,  
And took him, not against his will ;  
For he was but a poor man still,  
And they seemed mighty in the land.

His master followed on their track  
With outcries, but he could not speed.  
And soon a grim word sent him back  
With certain who obeyed his lead,  
But dared not help him in his need,  
There were too many to attack.

LXXI.

A man who trafficked in a godless trade,  
Once sold a something much below its worth.  
Into great folly he had been bewrayed.  
He saw too late the error he had made,  
And deemed himself the greatest fool on earth,  
And cursed, no doubt, the moment of his birth.  
He lost all heart, and died in a brief span,  
A disappointed and a ruined man.

---

LXXII.

A follower of a mighty man,  
Himself a man of some repute,  
Although a young man yet, outran  
Some others in a hard pursuit,  
And would not leave what he began,  
Though twice entreated by a foe,  
Who counselled him to change his plan,  
As being loth to lay him low ;  
Yet since he troubled him, anon  
He turned and smote him, and passed on.

---

LXXIII.

A man, whom all must pity,  
Was doomed by God's decree  
To die within a city  
Which he should never see.  
Now say, ye wise and witty,  
How such a thing could be.

And thitherward he wended,  
Downfallen and undone.  
Weak-minded and ill-friended,  
His doom he could not shun.  
Was ever reign so ended,  
Or exile so begun ?

In anguish and privation  
He gathered what he sowed :  
More than a generation  
Unsolaced he abode,  
Where stillness and stagnation  
Make life a weary load.

At last, when old and hoary,  
His hopes belike long dead,  
One came who knew his story,  
And lifted up his head ;  
And crowned it with a glory  
That seemed for ever fled.

So raised aloft and seated  
Among the rich and great,  
With greater honour treated  
Than men of like estate,  
His exile he completed,  
Yet piteous was his fate.

For well nigh the last vision  
That met his anguished sight,  
An act of fierce excision  
Made horrible his night,  
Which fell amid derision,  
And pitiless despite.

LXXIV.

A band of bad men overbold,  
    Essayed to do  
A something in the days of old,  
Misweening, but had cause to rue  
Their folly, for they missed their aim ;  
    And crowned with shame,  
Came off with damage to their crew.  
They overcame not, but o'ercome,  
Fled back confounded to their home,  
    And wanting weapons less than wings,  
Who thought to vie with mightier hands  
    That did great things,  
The fame whereof hath filled all lands.

---

LXXV.

We were a little band I own,  
Not half a dozen at the most,  
But terrible in war ; each one  
Picked out and chosen from a host.  
War-worthy all : yet I can boast  
I was the greatest of them all,  
Although the very first to fall.  
  
The man we served was in his youth  
A leader of unwarlike bands,  
And little thought of, yet in sooth  
The same was mighty of his hands,  
And now is famed throughout all lands.  
Ready he was at fight and feast,  
And not afraid of man or beast.

Yet very soon he cast me off,  
And drave me from him in his heat,  
And that with bitter scorn and scoff,  
And threats for such as I unmeet :  
A sorry guerdon and unsweet.  
I fled from him as from a foe,  
Not knowing whither I should go.

But when I met upon my course  
A man, who stayed me in my flight  
I slew him, and without remorse,  
Thought not possessing half his might.  
Yet I, too, fell in that same fight,  
Unhelped, though many men stood near :  
So ended my renowned career.

A swift career, full soon cut short ;  
For in my very prime I fell,  
An outcast of a dangerous sort ;  
And there were some who liked it well ;  
But there were many, sooth to tell,  
Who mourned my downfall, for they knew  
That trouble would anon ensue.

So I was buried in all haste,  
For there was much in hand that tide ;  
And in a strange tomb I was placed  
That was not very deep or wide.  
'Twas taken while I lay inside,  
And carried whither no man knows,  
So ends the story of my woes.

---

## LXXVI.

A bad man, at another man's request—  
    A good man, and his guest—  
Consulted one he hated, though the same  
    Was guiltless of all blame.  
But he was loth to do it : he could see  
    What in the end would be ;  
Nor was that ending other than he thought.  
    Although the man was taught  
To speak smooth things, and did so at the first,  
    The other's wrath outburst,  
For something in his manner, tone, or look,  
    Belied the words he spoke.  
But when adjured the very truth to show  
    He told it him, although  
It proved the folly of the other's plan.  
    Whereat the blinded man  
Was wroth with him, and quickly made him smart,  
    But still would not depart  
From his first purpose, neither would his friend,  
    But went on to the end,  
And saw, too late, in anguish and dismay,  
    The error of his way.

---

## LXXVII.

He charged her, but he err'd therein,  
    Ill judging, with a shameful crime,  
    And at a time  
When it had been a double sin.



He watched and waited, yet misread,  
And wrong'd her even by the thought ;  
But knowing nought  
The thing seemed even as he said.

---

## LXXVIII.

There lived a man of Esau's line  
Who took in hand a daring feat ;  
And failing not in his design,  
Received a guerdon not unsweet.

Not thus the story ends, for soon  
He grew a great man and a wise ;  
Surpassing, like the sun at noon,  
The golden promise of his rise.

For he was foremost of a line  
Related not by rank or birth,  
But founded by a power divine,  
And honoured only for their worth.

---

## LXXIX.

Lowborn, like all my family,  
I soon gave signs of my great worth,  
Though brought up in obscurity ;  
And full of promise was my birth.  
My father was not of the earth ;  
My mother was of low degree.

Much looked for, I at last appeared,  
Raised up by God to do great things,  
To save men from a fate they feared,  
And glad the hearts of clowns and kings,  
Whose longing would have lent me wings ;  
And many were the hearts I cheered.

Clad in a robe of sober hue,  
Sublimely to my work I sped,  
Damping the mirth of not a few ;  
And many in my train I led ;  
And many were the tears I shed  
Before I vanished from men's view.

Yet no man thought the less of me,  
But all the more. My tears fell fast :  
I wept o'er human misery,  
And thus washed out the bitter past.  
My weakness strengthened them at last :  
My very grief became their glee.

No king e'er wore a brighter crown,  
Or held a station half so high.  
Upon the loftiest I looked down ;  
Coldly I passed the mightiest by.  
Some saw me, and began to fly,  
And some were saddened by my frown.

My work was perfected anon—  
A goodly work that none could mend ;  
The self-same power that urged me on,  
Sustained me to the very end.  
Men hailed me as a welcome friend,  
Yet were not sad to find me gone.

## LXXX.

A woman who was much to blame,  
Was robbed and thwarted in her aim :  
So, stricken with this double grief,  
No wonder that the angry dame  
Bewailed her loss, and cursed the thief.  
Yet when she lighted on the same,  
She turned, and blest him in God's name.

She neither punished, nor abhorred  
The thief who of his own accord  
(How strange the story now appears)  
Gave back intact, the stolen hoard ;  
Nor with reproaches filled his ears ;  
But promised it should be restored,  
For she had vowed it to the Lord.

---

## LXXXI.

A shepherd once obeyed the sheep  
He could not keep  
Through want of confidence, or skill,  
Or courage, or a worse thing still.  
And thereby not a few sheep died  
Who could not guide,  
And would not follow, being led—  
Rash ones who hasted to be dead.  
And he who followed to his shame,  
Received much blame,  
And well nigh perished with the rest—  
A wretch unblessing and unblest.

LXXXII.

Three men, devoted to their king,  
Received command  
To hold back from a certain thing,  
Although each hand  
Was fain, belike, to have its fling.

Now many heard the king's request  
Beside the three,  
And one respected that behest  
When, certainly,  
He might have easily transgressed.

He told one of the three, whereon  
He got well blamed  
For that which he had left undone.  
But, unashamed,  
He answered meetly and anon.

The other heard, but would not stay  
For further speech ;  
But finding that the thing now lay  
Within his reach,  
He did it, and without delay.

Yet had another played his part ;  
Though inly glad,  
He might—so cruel was his heart—  
Have made him sad.  
But who was there to make him smart ?

## LXXXIII.

There lived in Jewry long ago—  
    Ah, grief and woe !  
Two shepherds—men who took no keep  
    To tend their sheep,  
But used them even as they would ;  
And this was vilely, unwithstood,  
But not unhidden. Nought cared they  
For any, but pursued their way,  
Well knowing that it was not good,  
Till both men perished in one day.

---

## LXXXIV.

Perplexed at what the days might bring,  
    And filled with doubt and fear,  
A ruler wished to know a thing  
    That touched him very near.  
But there was not a man to bring  
    The matter to his ear.  
So to a foreign lord he sent  
    To have the thing made plain ;  
But one who heard of his intent,  
    Resolved to make it vain,  
And sent him back a message blent  
    With anger and disdain.  
He loathed the message and the man,  
    And chafed at his reproof,  
And wished to have him for a span  
    Beneath the royal roof.  
The other shrewdly guessed his plan  
    And wisely held aloof.

The bad king had not strength or skill  
To back up his request ;  
He suffered for the thing, and still  
He would not let him rest.  
At last he yielded to his will,  
But not at his behest.

He came, nor feared the courtly throng  
More than the armed band ;  
Nor could the bad king do him wrong,  
Whatever he had planned.  
So nothing profited, ere long  
He perished from the land.

---

## LXXXV.

A certain king, who at the first did well,  
Fell into folly of the grossest sort ;  
And when rebuked, with anger he 'gan swell,  
And did not spare to cut the other short.  
Few were his words, and froward his retort.  
His heart was hardened, and he bade him cease,  
Who seeing plainly that he would not mend,  
Spake of a thing now certain, as he kenned,  
And soon to follow, and then held his peace.

---

## LXXXVI.

A man who wandered far apart  
From wisdom and the Godward way,  
Had something heavy at his heart,  
And no man could allay the smart,  
And it grew sorer day by day.

At last he bade a woman wend,  
Disguised for very shame, to one—  
A hoary prophet—once his friend,  
Who dwelt in darkness, but who kened  
Some things that in the light were done.

The same divined what they designed,  
And sent her homeward with a word  
That lacked the hope for which they pined ;  
'Twas cruel, but not all unkind,  
And she was troubled when she heard.

---

## LXXXVII.

A man there was who pledged his word,  
And vowed a vow that was not broken ;  
Yet its fulfilment he deferred,  
And wished it never had been spoken.  
His promise troubled him, but still  
He made it of his own free will.

---

## LXXXVIII.

Rough and ready, and in sooth,  
Rude, unpolished, and uncouth ;  
Chosen for a passing want,  
And thereafter for a witness.  
Though my merit was but scant,  
Yet I had a certain fitness  
For the office that I filled.

I was privately appointed,  
Raised, established, and anointed,  
Just because another willed.  
There were many of my class,  
But not many like to me—  
Pledges of a thing to be,  
Which came afterwards to pass.

---

LXXXIX.

One who was neighboured by a friend,  
Besought his help to gain an end  
Long looked for ; but the same delayed.  
So after he had asked him twice,  
He hit upon a strange device,  
Which brought him quickly to his aid.

---

XC.

A wicked king, whose hands were red  
With guiltless blood, who scorned reproof,  
And kicked at counsel, raised his hoof  
Against a better man, who fled,  
And in the old home of his race  
Found shelter for a little space,  
Like many others in like case.

Not thus could he escape his hand,  
For filled with hatred most intense,  
The tyrant sent and drew him thence,  
And brought him back to his own land.



And there he smote him. So he died,  
Unholpen ; but the spilt blood cried  
For vengeance, and was not denied.

---

## XCL

They made their brother's heart to ache,  
Whose trouble made them weep ;  
And made a vow they dared not break,  
Yet did not like to keep.

They robbed the innocent, to give  
The guilty what he lacked ;  
Invited home the fugitive,  
And shielded the attacked.

---

## XCIL

A man who had an envious eye  
Cut off a bad besotted king,  
And thus fulfilled a prophesy,  
But did a very wicked thing.

Now after he had seized the crown,  
He slew the kinsfolk of the dead,  
Lest these might live to pluck him down ;  
But there rose others in their stead.

Was ever king before or since,  
That reigned for such a little time ?  
And was there ever king or prince  
So strangely punished for his crime ?

He did not die a common death,  
Nor by the hand of friend or foe : -  
Nor sore disease cut short his breath,  
No deadly weapon laid him low.

A wicked woman named his name  
To one who followed in his track ;  
But, surely, he was not to blame,  
Nor did her menace turn him back.

---

## XCIII.

It lacked a something known to none,  
When first begun ;  
But want of knowledge (so we read)  
Supplied that need ;  
A strange thing, truly, and soon done.  
It came, and went, and would not stay,  
But day by day,  
Renewed its coming, with no hint  
Of stay or stint,  
And never failed them all the way :  
Who reaping what they had not sown,  
Where'er they went ;  
And gathering where they had not strown,  
Were not content,  
And therefore many were o'erthrown.

---

## XCIV.

A man once had a valiant friend  
Who helped him greatly by a trick,

Which did not fail to gain its end,  
Although found out. And though not quick  
To help him in a second strait—  
An office which he seemed to shun—  
Whereas the other could not wait,  
He did not leave the thing undone.  
He bettered thus the other's lot ;  
But thereby opened wide the door  
To discord, though he knew it not ;  
So in his anger he forswore  
All love and pity, though the twain  
Were kinsmen, and became his foe,  
And in a little while his bane—  
A thing forbidden, as we know.

---

## XCV.

There was once a subject people who rebelled  
against their lords ;  
But the same were strong and many, and they  
could not cast their cords.  
Hard they struggled for their freedom, but were  
beaten once again ;  
So they looked for added insult, and a tightening  
of their chain.  
Then they looked round for a helper, and they  
found a strong ally ;  
And they moved the same to join them, as in better  
days gone by.  
Now their foes were much disheartened when the  
matter reached their ears ;  
And the mighty hands grew feeble, and the stout  
hearts faint with fears.

Much they dreaded that new helper, which the  
other folk had won,  
For they thought of old disasters, and they deemed  
themselves undone.  
Yet they heartened one another—Should they  
change place with their slaves?  
Should they show their backs to bondmen and a  
people armed with staves?  
So the armies dashed together, and the waves of  
war ran high,  
And the earth shook at their conflict, and their  
tumult filled the sky.  
But the subject folk were beaten, though their  
triumph seemed so near;  
And they fled before their masters, who had cast  
away all fear.  
So these made a mighty slaughter, and they caught  
the very foe  
Whose appearing had so moved them but a little  
while ago.

---

## XCVI.

Doomed to destruction from its birth,  
A victim of a ruthless lord  
Was spared awhile for its great worth,  
And guarded like a miser's hoard.  
The scion of a race abhorred,  
Its days began in evil times—  
Fulfilled of many cruel crimes.  
Cast forth to perish like no few,  
It fell into the hands of one  
Of whose beginning no man knew,

Though many great things he had done :  
A sad fate which it could not shun.  
Scant hope had any anywhere  
Of those committed to his care.

It lodged with dragons and foul things,  
Though destined in a while to lie  
Within the dwellings of great kings ;  
And death in horrid shapes drew nigh.  
But death beheld it and passed by.  
Unhurt, as from the dead, it rose,  
And triumphed over all its foes.

---

## XCVII.

A hireling army, at its lord's behest,  
Prepared for war ; but at a man's request,  
It was not suffered to have part therein ;  
So it went back, indignant, to its kin,  
Sweeping the country like a very pest.

But when its lord sought to avenge that wrong,  
He could not speed, although he seemed so strong.  
Yet by good counsel he had done the thing  
Which moved those subjects of another king  
To smite his cities as they passed along.

---

## XCVIII.

Falsely accused by one who knew  
They were not guilty, for wise ends ;  
Shamed and disgraced in their own view ;  
Entrapped and taken—hapless few—

Far from their own land and their friends :  
Confounded, they would make amends  
For something which they have not done.  
They suffer greatly, and from one  
Who seems raised up to work their fall ;  
No hard thing, and it seems begun.  
To whom for succour can they call ?  
For who is there can stay his hand,  
Whom men call second in the land  
Where they are reckoned naught at all ?

---

## XCIX.

He meant to do another harm,  
And hurt himself, then in alarm  
Perceived the folly of his thought ;  
And suing to a generous foe,  
Obtained the succour which he sought,  
For nothing, though he meant not so ;  
Not being thankful for his aid,  
But he unwilling to be paid.

---

## C.

An illused man once lent his aid  
To certain who were much distress,  
And though his own folk were afraid,  
And grumbled, and awhile delayed,  
He saved them and became their guest.

Yet these would soon have brought him low,  
Who raised them up, though spared the sin,  
And he the sorrow ; for we know  
They would have sided with his foe,  
Who knew the danger he was in.

---

## CI.

A ceaseless wanderer up and down,  
And seen but seldom, if at all,  
I never entered house or town,  
Nor spoke to any, great or small ;  
Though not unspoken to, nor yet  
Regardless of the folk I met.

Obscure by birth, by nature great,  
My very name remains unknown.  
I rose to calm a troubled state ;  
Soon was the troubler overthrown.  
But such a lot fell to my share  
As none were ever doomed to bear.

Great honour was upon me thrust,  
But honour coveted by none.  
I shirked not, nor abused my trust,  
But gave it up when all was done.  
Then light of heart, like one set free,  
Sank back into obscurity.

---

## CII.

I dwelt contented in my home,  
A few short years, secure from ill ;  
Not dreaming I was doomed to roam  
Against my will.  
For I was reft away while young ;  
And doubtless others shared my lot,  
Torn from the home to which I clung,  
And ne'er forgot.  
My captors would not set me free ;  
And so within a great man's hall  
I dwelt, well cared for, it may be,  
But still a thrall.  
And yet I hated not my lord,  
Nor sought avengement of my wrong ;  
Although I gave him his reward,  
And that ere long.  
I had mine also, doubt it not,  
In favour, liberty, or gold ;  
But what thereafter was my lot  
I leave untold.

---

## CIII.

A certain man, one of the very poor,  
Was once raised up to do a thing for which  
He was not trained like others ; but, be sure,  
He lacked no fitness, though the great and rich,  
Beholding one raised up to that high pitch,  
Might scorn his person and condemn his word,  
For he rebuked the chief ones of the herd.



He went, obedient to a voice divine,  
Into a land where idol-gods bore sway,  
Where ruled a king—the greatest of his line—  
A man of war, and famous in his day.  
And there he did whatever in him lay ;  
But stayed not long, as some men understand,  
For one rose up to thrust him from the land.

This man, a teacher of a recreant folk,  
Charged him with treason, but therein he lied;  
Also to him a certain word he spoke,  
That he within his own land should abide.  
Which evil word drew down on that blind guide  
A heavy curse, that fell not to the ground,  
Though its fulfilment can be nowhere found.

---

#### CIV.

A city which at one fell stroke  
Had been dispeopled of its folk  
For not responding to a call,  
Repeopled by the self-same race,  
Was once more in an evil case,  
Though now recovered from its fall.

Pressed from without, the folk within  
Craved speedy succour from their kin,  
To save them from a dreadful doom.  
And there rose up a man of might  
And saved them, and preserved the light  
That else had ended in deep gloom.

The grateful memory of his deed  
Outlived him, for it moved their seed  
To something worthy of all praise.  
Yet he was of that tribe, still small,  
Whose crime had ended in the fall  
Of that same city in past days.

---

CV.

A grey-haired warrior and a priest,  
Whose names I will not quote,  
Were once invited to a feast,  
With many others of less note.  
They ate, they drank, they made great mirth :  
The good time seemed begun.  
They thought to lord it in the earth,  
And spake as if the thing was done.  
But, as they ended, there arose  
A mighty din without ;  
They knew not if from friends or foes,  
And there was anguish in the doubt.  
But one came in and told them all,  
When filled with deep dismay,  
They started up, both great and small,  
And hasted each to go his way.

---

CVI.

A man once planned a deep disgrace  
For one of an unfriendly race,

Then, happy in his power and pelf,  
Devised fresh honours for himself ;  
And thus, although he meant not so,  
Secured the triumph of his foe.  
Was ever downfal and defeat  
So little looked for and complete ?  
Or such an end to such a plot ?  
But he deserved it, did he not ?

---

## CVII.

Seen but once, and not with eyes,  
Underneath the open skies.  
'Twas not as the seer thought,  
Though he was divinely taught.  
Solid seeming, firm to view,  
Something wholly strange and new,  
Not for man's use, but his good ;  
There are many made of wood,  
But not any anywhere  
Half so lengthy, or that e'er  
Bore so wonderful a load.

---

## CVIII.

An exiled man, devoid of blame,  
Was helped by one—the same 'tis said  
As once was baffled in his aim  
By him from whom the other fled.

Years came and wholly changed his lot,  
Yet when that helper's days were done,  
The holpen, who had not forgot,  
Sent a kind message to his son.

But he, ill-counselled by his friends,  
Returned an answer all unmeet ;  
Deeming the other had such ends  
As he was minded to defeat.

---

CIX.

They did what seemed a cruel deed,  
And one they laboured to prevent ;  
They did it in their utmost need,  
And had no reason to repent.  
It saved them from a greater ill,  
Although it caused another pain ;  
But if it went against his grain,  
It was not done against his will.

---

CX.

A king once made alliance  
With one who did much ill,  
And that through weak compliance,  
With one who sinned her fill,  
And acted in defiance  
Of God and His plain will.

Perchance this bad man's daughter  
Was pleasing to his son,  
Who, Sampson-like, had sought her,  
And would be ruled by none ;  
Not minding who had taught her,  
Nor what the same had done.

Or, may be deep ambition,  
Not all unmixed with greed,  
And hope of some great mission,  
To which the same might lead,  
Or longings for union  
Had led him to the deed.

Whatever he intended,  
It was not from God's hand ;  
The twain might not be blended,  
Nor singly could they stand.  
And so it only ended  
In grief to his own land.

---

CXI.

From childhood I was doomed to bear  
A grief that darkened all my days,  
A wretch dependent on men's care,  
But barred from many of their ways.

Deceived, forsaken, and maligned,  
By one who should have been my stay ;  
And blamed for being left behind,  
When none would help me on my way.

Charged falsely and behind my back  
With treason, and condemned unheard,  
And by a friend who was not slack,  
To utter or revoke his word.

---

CXII.

A cruel man, who well deserved  
All he endured  
(As he served others he was served),  
Escaped awhile through one who swerved  
From duty—driven or allured ;  
Thus hinting that the same might yet,  
Escape the utmost of a debt  
Which was not cancelled, be assured.

---

CXIII.

Some men were minded once to slay  
A neighbour, for that he alone  
Had bought his safety in a way  
That seemed a menace to their own,  
Which seemed a selfish thing to do,  
A treacherous and a mean thing too,  
And something hitherto unknown.  
  
So all set on him at one time,  
Five against one : success seemed clear ;  
Yet could not they complete their crime,  
For some one hasted and drew near.

Then pressed in turn they turned and fled,  
With death behind them and o'erhead,  
And kept together in their fear.

They came together to a cave,  
And hid together in the gloom,  
For there were none to help or save.  
There quaking they abode their doom.  
Their shelter soon became a snare,  
And then a prison nowise fair,  
And soon it served them for a tomb.

---

## CXIV.

That he might better gain his ends,  
A man once made a foolish oath  
Which troubled many of his friends,  
And helped the enemies of both.

---

## CXV.

Of two things he had choice to do,  
He chose what seemed the better plan,  
Which proved the worse thing of the two,  
And that within a little span;  
For having started on his way,  
He met with damage and delay.  
And so with something of remorse,  
He thought upon a slighted word.

Whereby had he but shaped his course,  
This trouble never had occurred.  
But this man suffered not alone,  
Nor was the error all his own.

---

CXVI.

A young man who had newly come  
To honour which he had not sought,  
But shrunk from, was contemned by some,  
Who gave rude utterance to their thought.  
He took no vengeance for that slight,  
Although he noted what they said,  
And when his power was at its height,  
And certain wished to have them dead,  
Their lives were precious in his sight.

---

CXVII.

A few poor men in direst need—  
A band unlovely and unblest—  
Went forth upon a fearsome quest,  
Much doubting whither it would lead.  
But very death was at their door.  
What profit was there in delay?  
So they set forth upon their way  
With death behind them and before,  
About the ending of the day.  
They went forth burdened on their road,  
But came back lightened of their load.



## CXVIII

A man once started in great haste  
Upon a journey still untraced.  
    Some doubted once where it had end,  
    And marvelled whither he would wend;  
But all discovered it at last.

He left a certain thing behind,  
It may be from an absent mind,  
    Or, in pursuance of some plan  
    Well pondered, for he knew the man  
Who needs the missing thing must find.

The same beheld it on the ground,  
And picked it up with grief profound,  
    And dealt therewith a mightier blow  
    Than ever warrior gave his foe,  
Though only one man saw the wound.

---

## CXIX.

There was once an angry wight,  
Who poured out a flood of spite,  
Though it surely was not right,  
    On a man  
Who was hateful in his sight,  
For the darkening of the light  
    Of his clan.

But the other though illused,  
Cursed, insulted, and abused,

As upon the thing he mused,  
In some sort  
Held his enemy excused,  
And he utterly refused  
To retort.

---

CXX.

A prince received a strange command  
As he rose up with many more,  
Who knew not of the thing in hand,  
To go into a far-off land—  
A region hateful as death's door.  
He had to do a certain deed—  
A matter neither long nor large ,  
And if he did the thing decreed,  
As ordered, which we do not read,  
He kept not what he took in charge.

---

CXXI.

Once a brother of a brother  
Craved a favour nowise great,  
But much needed, yet the other  
Sent him empty from his gate.  
Well he knew the thing was wanted,  
Yet he roughly answered, No !  
If you take the thing ungranted,  
I will treat you as my foe.

But his brother still entreated—  
He intended no offence ;  
Still his answer he repeated,  
And prepared to drive him thence.

Deep distrust and dark suspicion  
Both engendered that reply ;  
Had he granted his petition,  
He had profited thereby.

Disappointed, heavy hearted,  
Unbefriended in his need,  
From his gate the same departed,  
But he ne'er forgot the deed.

They were children of one mother,  
And had quarrelled once before ;  
For they were not like each other,  
And they vexed each other sore.

Each to each a near abider,  
Proved a foe and not a friend ;  
So the breach grew ever wider,  
And continued to the end.

---

CXXII.

He was but a little child  
When he fled  
From a region all defiled  
With its dead ;

From a graveyard heaped and piled,  
Doubly red.  
Red by name and with the blood  
Of its sons,  
Who had perished, bloom and bud,  
Hapless ones.  
He was caught away and carried,  
In amaze,  
To a strange land where he tarried  
Many days.  
Now this land had been the prison  
Of his foes,  
Ere a helper had uprisen  
In their woes.  
Then there came a welcome message  
To his ears ;  
He had waited for that presage  
Through long years.  
They were dead who wrought such slaughter  
Hand in hand,  
When the blood of men like water  
Drenched the land.  
Though his lot was nowise meagre,  
Yet anon,  
He grew restless and was eager  
To be gone.  
In his own land, not another,  
He would dwell,  
Though the king, who was his brother,  
Loved him well.  
So he left him heavy-hearted  
On his throne,  
And he rose up and departed  
To his own.

## CXXIII.

Some men were once intent on ill,  
And lacked not strength to do their will;  
But one who shared not in their thought  
Proposed another plan which still  
Would bring them to the end they sought.

And they gave heed to that same man,  
Who won them over to his plan.  
But he, although they knew it not,  
Had only joined them for a span,  
That he might better wreck their plot.

But after he had gone his way,  
And could not hinder or gainsay,  
They foiled him, though they meant not so,  
Who soon found out to his dismay,  
And knew not whither he should go.

---

CXXIV.

A man was once praised for a thought, and by one  
Who yet would not suffer the thing to be done.  
Albeit, the thing had seemed good in the eyes  
Of one who was wise;  
Who bade him go on and do all that he would;  
Who did what he could,  
And laboured no little for something begun,  
And brought to an end in the days of his son.

## CXXV.

Nestled in a little pleasant valley lay a little town  
wherein  
Dwelt a people who had wandered from their  
country and their kin.  
Here they lived in peace and plenty, from the noisy  
world shut out ;  
Calm and careless, and regardless of the nations  
round about.  
There were none without to threat them, there  
were none within to vex ;  
For they had no king to curb them, and no trouble  
to perplex.  
But their peace was rudely broken, for there came  
a prying band,  
Seeking for a home to dwell in as they journeyed  
through the land.  
These beheld the happy valley, and they saw the  
land was good ;  
For there seemed a lack of nothing, and the folk  
did as they would.  
Back they went to those who sent them—folk  
abiding in the south ;  
And they told them of that valley, and they praised  
it with one mouth.  
Then uprose the folk who heard them. Seeing  
that they needs must roam,  
They would seek that happy valley—could they  
find a better home ?  
So they started with their households, and they  
came at last thereto.  
And they smote the quiet city, and the peaceful  
folk they slew.

For these knew not of their coming, so the gates  
were left ajar;  
And no man arose to help them, for their kindred  
dwelt afar,  
And they dwelt secure and careless, and were taken  
unawares.  
Thus they seized the happy valley and the land  
that was not theirs;  
And they built a place to dwell in, for they burnt  
the former town;  
And the same became a city, and a landmark of  
renown.

---

## CXXVI.

A thief detected in a theft  
Received no blame, but rather praise,  
E'en from the robbed one, thus bereft  
Of something hidden from their gaze,  
Who seeing saw not, but were stirred  
With unfeigned wonder when they heard.

---

## CXXVII.

A man once told a foolish lie,  
But failed thereby  
To hide a base thing he had done,  
Deceiving one  
Who knew not, and might never know,  
And knowing haply had not cared;  
For it went well with him, howso  
The other fared.

## CXXVIII.

He risked his life to save his lord,  
Although he tarried with his foe,  
Who knew not of the strict accord  
Which there was still between the two,  
And haply never came to know.

For full of undiscovered guile  
This other who appeared his friend,  
Sought his undoing all the while,  
And wrought his downfall in the end,  
Thus marring what he could not mend.

---

## CXXIX.

A man who laboured for a worthy end,  
And though still young had drawn anigh thereto,  
For so said one who would have been his friend,  
Shrunk from the little there was left to do :  
Victor almost, he from the fight withdrew,  
Missing the victory he had well nigh won,  
So hard the thing was that he left undone.

---

## CXXX.

A nation that had seized the land,  
And cities of a neighbouring race,  
Attacked in turn could not withstand  
Another people, but gave place  
To this new-comer—forced to yield—  
Though long time they had kept the field.



Peace followed, and the land had rest,  
And long years passed, but one there came  
Bringing with it a strange request  
From certain who revived their claim,  
Deeming that region still their own.  
After whole centuries now had flown.

Their foes returned a meet reply,  
Maintaining they had done no wrong.  
If they had been aggrieved thereby,  
Wherefore had they delayed so long ?  
Had any heard of such a claim  
From others who had fared the same ?

They recked not for their hearts were set  
On conquest—eager for the fray,  
They would not hearken—so they met  
In battle, but they rued the day,  
Who to their folly soon awoke,  
But long time suffered from that stroke.

---

CXXXI.

A king who feared both friends and foes,  
Craved counsel of an injured man ;  
But planned to hide the thing from those  
Who were the authors of his woes,  
And being holpen in his plan,  
Escaped the danger when it rose.

---

## CXXXII.

He taught the truth and wished it to be taught,  
Yet silenced one whose witness was most true ;  
And on himself swift punishment he brought,  
For some there were who hated what he wrought,  
And made him smart for what he did not rue.  
But some repented, smarting in their turn,  
And learned a lesson they were loth to learn.

---

## CXXXIII.

A man once did a generous deed,  
Sheltering a foeman in his need,  
Though of another race and creed.

He made the same an honoured guest,  
Whom none dared harass or molest ;  
He gave him largely of his best.

The days went by, their friendship grew :  
He reckoned he should never rue  
His confidence in one so true.

Yet this man whom he deemed so just,  
Deceived him, and betrayed his trust,  
Soiling his honour in the dust.

Whereof the other man knew nought :  
No tidings of the same were brought,  
So well, yet wickedly, he wrought.

## CXXXIV.

There rose a leader in an age long passed,  
But not of armies or of armed bands.  
Well were they led who followed to the last,  
And came from far with offerings in their hands  
They sought and found the longed-for of all land  
Attained their purpose, and were well content,  
Then went back home, much wondering as the  
went.

---

## CXXXV.

A bad man wept beside a good man's bed,  
Grieved at his passing who was mightier far  
Than all his chariots and his steeds of war ;  
For now the same was ready to be dead.  
So, sad of heart, he heeded what he said ;  
But heeding, erred, not knowing aught could spri  
From what he needs must deem a very little thir

---

## CXXXVI.

A baseborn but a valiant wight,  
Thrust out as one who had no right,  
Fled from his kindred and became  
The captain of a froward crew.  
And if that like to them he grew  
They could not marvel who might blame  
A man so treated ; yet the same,  
Was found a worthier than his foes,

As these discovered to their shame,  
When for their succour he uprose,  
And they beheld him at the close  
Brought in with honour and acclaim.

---

CXXXVII.

A man whose greed surpassed his wit,  
As all admit,  
Demanded something from his foe—  
A man brought low—  
Who granted it, whereon the same  
Increased his claim,  
Deeming it all within his clutch ;  
But asked too much,  
And so gained nothing, but lost all—  
A loss not small—  
But soon recovered from his fall.

---

CXXXVIII.

A righteous man unjustly met his death,  
Reproving one who bore not to be chid.  
He doomed his murderers with his latest breath,  
And so to them an ill thing soon betid.  
Because they sinned well knowing what they did,  
Vengeance o'ertook the doers of that wrong ;  
Their leader, too, died wretchedly ere long.

## CXXXIX.

They met together, with a good intent,  
To do a something which they could not do.  
They did not well, however well they meant ;  
Lightening no load but adding more thereto.  
They got well chid who came to help their friend,  
And of the same were holpen in the end.

---

## CXL.

A thievish band of swarthy folk—  
A vagrant crew—  
Whose necks had never worn the yoke,  
Who did not toil as others do,  
Were ordered, and the thing was done,  
As was most meet,  
To bring the plunder they had won,  
And lay it at another's feet.

---

## CXLI.

A man who played a double part  
Was once well chid  
By one whose singleness of heart  
Was plain to all in all he did.  
He chid him, and before them all,  
Not fearing any great or small.

CXLII.

A man once tried to right a wrong,  
But failed ere long,  
Finding his enemies too strong.  
He could not count upon the aid  
Of friends dismayed :  
He seemed distrusted and betrayed.  
So he went forth to dwell elsewhere ;  
But did not spare,  
To do the same thing even there.  
He helped the feeble to their right,  
Like some good knight,  
And found acceptance in their sight.

---

CXLIII.

Within a city which drew near its fall—  
A doom forewritten—lived a worthy man.  
A slave he was within a great man's hall,  
Great in name only, for his power was small,  
And crushed for ever in a little span.  
He saved another, who was like to die—  
A righteous man by many foes begirt.  
The city fell, and bitter was its cry,  
Nor were they few who suffered scathe thereby,  
But he for one went forth of it unhurt.

## CXLIV.

A man who started on his way,  
Upon a matter not unknown,  
Was charged with hastening its decay  
Whose ruin he had sought to stay,  
But might not, being all alone :  
So it came on without delay.  
Meanwhile he suffered bonds and blows ;  
His faithfulness had made him foes ;  
And in the prison house he lay  
Until the city was o'erthrown—  
A trouble he had oft foreshown.

---

## CXLV.

He wished for something but thereof  
He feared he might not have enough,  
If he gained anything at all,  
And certainly his chance seemed small.  
But in the issue, highly blest,  
He fared far better than the rest ;  
Who straightway murmured and repined,  
Not liking any of his kind.

---

## CXLVI.

A lonely traveller once set out,  
But knew not whither he should go :  
He faltered, and was filled with doubt,  
And oftentimes he turned about,  
And long time wandered to and fro ;

And starting often, oft turned back,  
As one uncertain of the track.

Nor found he any, high or low,  
To help him, or supply his lack :  
He sought for something without rest,  
And was not single in his quest.

---

CXLVII.

A man long sought for far and wide,  
Sent for his seeker, who 'gan chide.  
He called him by a slanderous name,  
And charged him with his own offence  
Who was not guilty, but the same  
Who seemed so in a certain sense,  
Hurled back the title and the blame :  
His was the folly, sin, and shame.

---

CXLVIII.

A man who had but little faith,  
Was told to do a dangerous thing,  
And did it ; but thro' fear of scath,  
He waited till the day took wing ;  
For there were many to his few  
Who would be angry when they knew.



## CXLIX.

They hung together, row on row,  
A goodly show ;  
Or glittered, sunlike, in the sun,  
Dazzling each one.  
They were a glory and a pride,  
The wonder of all lands. Wide-eyed,  
The swart kings looked on them and sighed ;  
Their fame was bruited far and wide.

At length the fine gold turned to dross,  
Ah, change and loss !  
They passed to other lands, alack !  
And came not back.  
They went, and others took their place,  
Made like themselves, but poor and base ;  
And well might shame suffuse his face  
Who bore the trouble and disgrace.

---

## CL.

A man turns homeward from a bootless quest ;  
His hands are empty, but his heart is full ;  
For this is he who was the wise man's guest,  
And he has told him he was born to rule  
Another heart he carries in his breast,  
The portals of another life unclosed.  
Silent he goes, revolving many things—  
Kingdoms and conquests, and the death of kings—  
But nought thereof to any man he shows.

CLI.

A man was minded once to know  
The measure of his worth,  
Which was not little, as we trow,  
Albeit certain deemed it so  
Who judged unworthily, although  
He filled a high place in the earth,  
Seeing the very sum they gave  
Was but the value of a slave.

---

CLII.

Three things existed long ago,  
Bearing a common name, although  
Not much in common could they show.

They rose, the work of different hands ;  
At different times, in different lands ;  
Two of them by divine commands.

The first rose slowly year by year,  
The second held a thing most dear,  
The third was fenced about with fear.

The largest was the first to rise,  
The second was the least in size,  
The third most glorious in men's eyes.

The first saved many, being great,  
The second one—condemned by hate,  
The third one shortened some men's date

Now all are gone, whate'er their lot,  
Destroyed by fire, or left to rot,  
Or turned into we know not what.

THE END.

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**I N V E R S E .**



# ANSWERS

TO

## SCRIPTURE RIDDLES IN VERSE.

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- I.—Rod of Moses.  
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III.—Eutychus. Acts xx. 9.  
IV.—Mordecai.  
V.—Ittai the Gittite. 2 Sam. xv. 19.  
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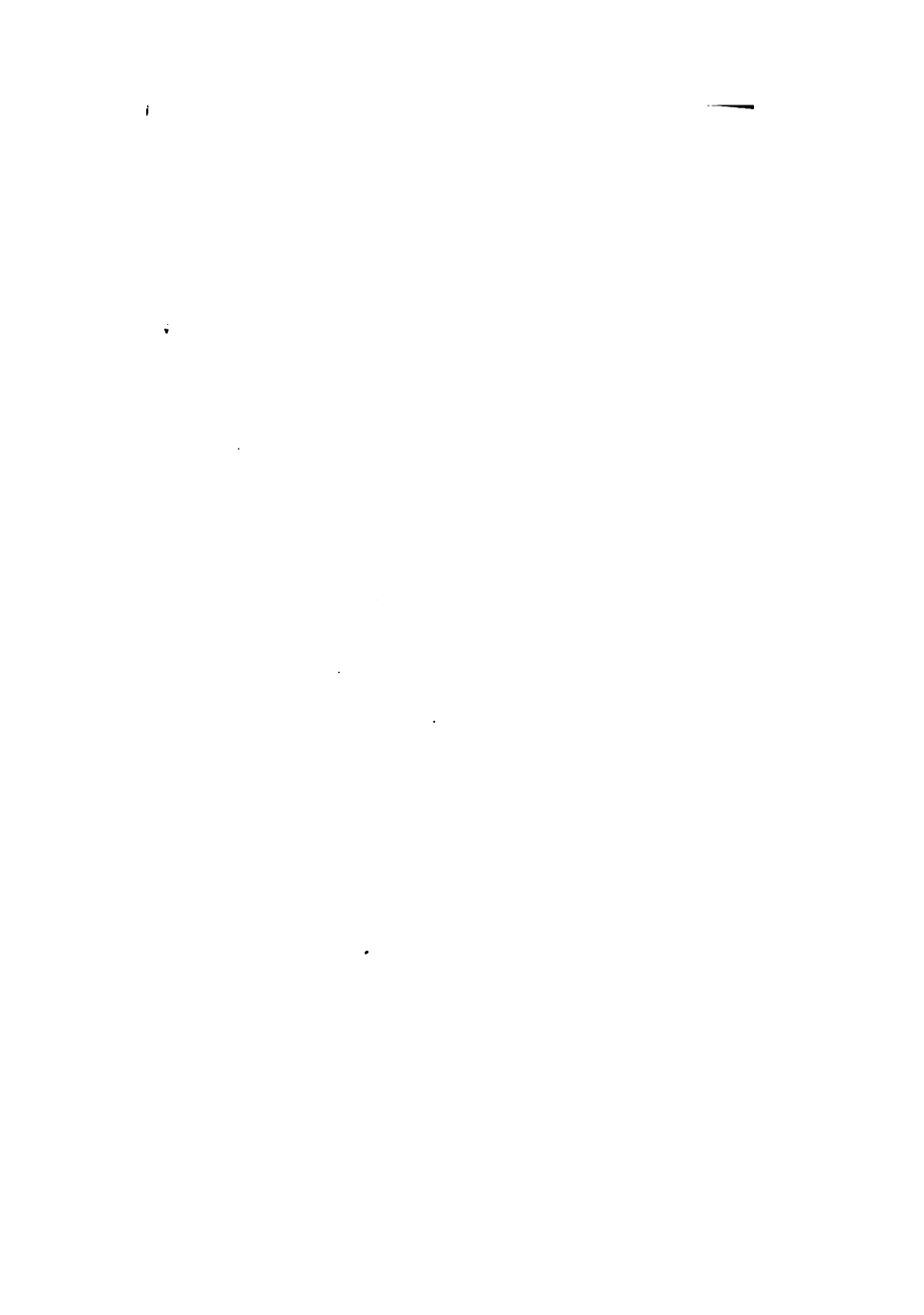
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 CLI.—Zechariah. Zech. xi. 12—13.  
 CLII.—Noah's ark, ark of bulrushes, and ark of covenant.











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